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The night before the wedding day, starting at midnight, a *pai-pai* is held at the boy's home. A Taoist priest (*tao shih*) officiates at the ceremony, held in honor of T'ien Kung to thank him for guarding the boy so that he could reach marriageable age, and prayers are said for the future of the boy and his family. At the same time, many lesser gods are invited to the *pai-pai* to be worshipped, and statues of these gods (which may belong to other villagers) are brought to the ancestral-worship room of the boy's home. The village orchestra performs during most of this ceremonial to entertain T'ien Kung. Many expensive foods, including at least one whole dressed pig and goat, bottles of wine, and a good deal of paper money are offered in honor of the gods and their soldiers and horses. (A description of the Taoist pantheon is found in Chapter 8.)

The *tao shih* invites the gods to partake of the sacrifices and transmits to them the prayers of the family. In the course of the ritual the *tao shih* and the participating members of the family, including the groom and his father and brothers, simulate trips to heaven and to the underworld to communicate with the gods. A shaman, known as *t'iao t'ung* (his broader functions are also described in detail in Chapter 8), accompanies them on these "trips." He is possessed by a local, less powerful, and important god known as an ambassador god and thus acts as the intermediary between the family and the higher gods. "After all," queried a villager on this point, "can a common man go directly on his own to see and talk with an emperor?"

Much of the food offered at the *pai-pai* is sent the next day as gifts to the girl's family; during the next several days it is fed to the guests who attend the wedding festival as well as the many people, usually *ch'in tsu* or fellow villagers, who help in the preparations and entertainment of the guests at the girl's village. The cost to both sets of parents is very great, and the poorest families save for a long time or borrow money in order to have a proper wedding festival.

While the boy's family is holding the *pai-pai* on the night before the marriage, the girl's family is busy with preparations for the next day. When the marriage broker, accompanied by the carriers bearing more gifts, and the village orchestra arrive, they are fed in the girl's village. Then, they help the girl's family load the many carts with her dowry and the sweet cakes which accompany the bride when she goes to the groom's village in her sedan chair.

The vehicles which carry the gifts to the bride's family and take the dowry back to the groom's village are either rented wheeled carts drawn by men hired in Lukang or trays carried on poles by the groom's *ch'in tsu* and/or fellow villagers. Only a wealthy family can afford to use the many hand-carried trays, since all the carriers must be fed banquet food and those who carry heavy items are given *hung pao* (money wrapped in a red paper packet). Far fewer wheeled carts are

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The bridal train follows a predetermined route, passing through several villages to display the dowry for all to see, even if the bridal couple live in neighboring villages and even if they happen to come from the same village. All along the route the special wedding music of gongs and horns attracts villagers who wish to see the procession.

The time of arrival in the groom's village, usually in the afternoon, has previously been fixed by a geomancer. Most of the villagers are outdoors waiting to examine the dowry. The bride's sedan chair is placed before the door of the boy's house, but the girl may not leave the chair and enter the house until the dowry has been ritually examined and accepted by the groom. Once this is done, a child of the household formally welcomes the bride to her new home, and she is led from the sedan chair and escorted into the house by the matchmaker. On entering the house the bride steps over a burning brazier and steps on and breaks a piece of red tile. The first act symbolically cleanses her of any ill fortune she may have picked up accidentally along the way (an example of such an accidental contamination is for the wedding caravan to pass a funeral along its route). The second act symbolizes the bride's willingness and her intention to obey her new family. These acts completed, she is led to a private room where "according to custom" she spends the next several hours alone except for occasional visits from the matchmaker.

That evening a festive banquet is held to celebrate the marriage. An even number of courses is always served, sometimes as many as sixteen to eighteen, and a great deal of wine is consumed. The banquet is attended by many guests, male and female, old and young, for the most part relatives (*ch'in ch'i*) and friends of the boy's family only. The adult males eat apart from the women and children. Either a *ch'in tsu* of the groom or else a fellow villager plays host at almost every table of male guests to see that the guests eat and drink and are generally entertained. Finger games to promote the drinking of wine are usually played. Other male *ch'in tsu* and village friends and neighbors serve the food to the guests, while the women help in the kitchen. The male cooks are hired from the village or from the local area. Dishes, tables, and chairs are hired for the occasion in Lukang and brought into the village by oxcart.

About halfway through the banquet the bride is brought out and, together with the groom and his parents, is formally presented to the assemblage of guests and villagers by a highly regarded elder *ch'in tsu* or a respected villager. After this introduction, many respected guests are called upon to give brief speeches; in these they remind the young couple of their duty to their parents and express hopes that children will soon result from the marriage, especially boys. The speeches completed, the groom goes from table to table, drinking with and accept-

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hsiang Public Office and obtain permission to bury the body in the public cemetery. (Burial in private fields has not been permitted since early in the Japanese period.)

Relatives, including *ch'in tsu*, married daughters, and *ch'in ch'i*, are notified of the death and asked to come to the home of the deceased. Relatives in distant places are notified by means of telegram, special-delivery express letter, or telephone. If their relationship to the deceased was a close one, they too are asked to come to the village. Relatives who live nearby are usually notified of the death by messengers, such as a younger member of the deceased's family or some *ch'in tsu*, friend, or neighbor.

While they are still on the road approaching the village relatives begin to wail, and as they enter the village they fall to their knees and crawl to the house and into the room where the body lies. Someone who was present at the time of the death may crawl out to meet and welcome these relatives and then crawl into the room with them. *Ch'in tsu* relatives and married daughters are expected to wail and crawl both to show their respect for the deceased and to express their sorrow for not being present at the death. The villagers consider it unfilial to be absent when a parent or *ch'in tsu* relative who is older or of a higher generation dies. Many villagers look on and may criticize the arrivals for not wailing loud enough or for not getting down on their hands and knees to crawl soon enough. One may also hear old village women note how filial someone is because of the distance she crawls or the way she wails.

Preparation for the Funeral and Burial

Immediately after the death, arrangements are made for five *tao shih* to come to the village from Lukang to officiate at the funeral. A village funeral may be delayed because the *tao shih* are participating in a funeral elsewhere and are not available immediately. Usually, five *tao shih* form a group and work together with a small orchestra of three or four men who normally accompany them to the ceremony. The group of about eight men usually charges approximately NT $380 (US $10.50).

It is very rare that a Buddhist funeral is held in Hin Hsing or other villages of the area. While most of the villagers worship Buddha and Kuan Yin along with the Taoist hierarchy of gods, they are not Buddhists, and the one such funeral held in recent years was for the old mother of the largest landlord family in the village. This woman was a Buddhist, and while she was still alive had Buddhist nuns come to the village to pray for her.

Virtually all village families willingly assist in the funeral preparations. Most village families are members of one of several "Father-